

# Wabash Valley First Site In State For Apprenticeship Program

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“If I can keep guys out of jail, give them employment...its win/win ...And historically, our state has not done a great job of creating opportunities outside of offense. We have to do better than that because we’re recycling human beings”

J. David Donahue, commissioner



Wabash Valley Correctional Facility Print Shop



Commissioner Donahue



Mike Herron,  
Director, PEN Products

Inside a building that's part of a compound surrounded by gray fencing topped with razor wire, men in light brown uniforms walked around an industrial floor packed with noisy machines printing images and words onto blank paper.

At one machine, two men dressed in similar brown uniforms stacked and packed into boxes the red, white and blue Indiana driver's manuals that rolled off the machine like an assembly line.

Then the presses suddenly halted to a stop Thursday morning, as state officials donning business attire walked the press shop floor.

Inmates working in the print shop in the Wabash Valley Correctional Facility in Carlisle stopped their work to listen as prison and state officials announced that Wabash Valley is the first Indiana institution to participate in an apprenticeship program. The program allows prisoners to earn certification from the U.S. Department of Labor for their work. Officials hope the program will lead to prisoners finding work and obtaining a high wage once they leave the prison.

The program requires inmates to receive 8,000 hours of training, including 600 hours of classroom

instruction, to receive the certification.

Twenty-one inmates already have signed up for the program, with more inmates anticipated to sign up soon.

There are the individuals that do not get the opportunities of a lot of people outside of this facility, “said John Delgrado, the Indiana Director with the U.S. Department of Labor who helped develop the program. The work that you see here today is probably going to be better than a lot of print shops outside of a correctional facility.”

Prison officials developed the program with Labor Department representatives and officials from the Prison Enterprises Network Products to identify Wabash Valley as the first site in Indiana for an apprenticeship program.

“If I can keep guys out of jail, give them employment...its win/win,” said J. David Donahue, commissioner of the Indiana Department of Correction. “And historically, our state has not done a great job of creating opportunities outside of offense.”

Donahue said current statistics show that many prisoners are repeat offenders, and two problems they face when they leave prison are finding employment and housing.

“We have to do better than that because we’re recycling human beings,” Donahue said.

Officials hope the new program will allow prisoners to learn a trade and become certified as a journeyman for a particular occupation. Although Wabash Valley’s program is for print operators, state officials hope to develop other programs in different trades statewide.

Officials hope to have eight apprenticeship programs at various correctional facilities in Indiana by the end of the year, with 400 to 500 inmates participating in the program, said Doug Evans, operations manager for PEN Products.

“Will, these guys, they are going to know their stuff when they get out there.” Evans said. “I think they’ll be able to conduct a much more intelligent interview.”

Some of the inmates also are looking forward to the program. Fernando Griffith worked at a Komori 2, one of the machines on the print shop floor. After the presentation, he cleared out a paper jam and helped prepare paper to feed it into the machine.

He normally works from 6:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., with breaks for lunch and dinner, he said. His 12-hour day includes some overtime hours.

“Compared to some of the other jobs. I’d rather do this,” Griffith said. “With this job, you actually get to

enjoy seeing the end product of your work,” he said.

## **About The Department of Correction**

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department’s home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department’s Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.